

Clarksburg is wedged out

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By Paige L. Hill

ROCKVILLE — The Montgomery County Council voted Tuesday to terminate the Clarksburg Town Center Development District project, citing concerns over costs and seven years of delay as the reason. The resolution to terminate development was passed by a 5-4 vote with Councilman Mike Knapp (D-Dist. 2) serving as the chief sponsor of the resolution.

“Today’s action lifts a dark cloud that has hung over this aspect of the development of Clarksburg,” said Knapp, whose district includes Clarksburg. The Clarksburg Town Center Development District was proposed in 2003 to cover residences built over an unincorporated area of approximately 247 acres. Resolution 15-87, which created the district, listed specific infrastructure items that it would finance, including road improvements, a library, enhancements for the planned Clarksburg Village South local park and improvements to local trails.

“I have heard the ongoing concerns of the residents of Clarksburg and have seen first-hand the failure of county government’s oversight and implementation in the development of this emerging community,” Knapp said. “The Clarksburg community needs to move ahead without additional bureaucratic delays.”

Last week, Clarksburg developer Newland Communities met with the county’s Planning Board to give a quarterly report on the project. Newland Vice President Douglas Delano told the board that after meeting with more than 50 different retail developers, the company had still not found a partner to build the 10- to 12-acre retail district of the project. Delano cited plans for the garage parking as the deterrent for development partners.

Knapp was joined by Councilman Marc Elrich (D-At large), George Leventhal (D-At large), Nancy Navarro (D-Dist. 4) and Council President Nancy Floreen (D-At large) in voting to terminate the project.

“It is long past time for Clarksburg residents to have certainty regarding what infrastructure will be built, when it will be built and how it will be paid for,” Leventhal said.

“The residents of Clarksburg have had their houses under a cloud of uncertainty long enough and deserve a resolution to their problem,” Elrich said. “Not knowing what the tax burden on their property would be makes it hard for families to plan and budget and poses a hurdle to a potential buyer of one of these houses because they can’t be certain of the tax burden they would be assuming.”

Voting to maintain the district, at least until a working group on financing infrastructure in Clarksburg reports next spring, was Council Vice President Valerie Ervin (D-Dist. 5) and Council members Phil Andrews (D-Dist. 3), Roger Berliner (D-Dist. 1) and Duchy Trachtenberg (D-At large).

The termination does not directly affect two other development districts proposed for Clarksburg, the Clarksburg Village and Clarksburg Skylark development districts. However, it decreases the likelihood of them going forward, according to Knapp.